



Shadowing showtime

Career exploration, when done correctly, can solve so many workforce problems. It is why our Chamber of Commerce spends so much time and so many resources on helping our local young people find career direction and ideally find it close to home.

The BASICS Committee of the Chamber has put a number of initiatives in place to help students gain insight into what careers exist, what degree of education and training are necessary to pursue those careers and what salary and benefits usually follow them.

In a pre-Covid world, those initiatives included Career Fairs in both 8th and 10th grades and a week of Career Shadowing in 11th grade. Supplemented by programs within individual schools, it provided enough information to launch the thought processes that helped students to take many of the next steps on their own.

Covid destroyed all of that. The Career Fairs were cancelled for both 2020 and 2021. Career Shadowing Week lost 2020. But an effort to salvage Career Shadowing in 2021 is still on track for November 15-19 and it includes not only high school juniors but seniors as well.

"The current senior class at all Blair County schools has missed everything," explained Judy Rossi, who has been Career Shadowing extraordinaire since the program started more than a dozen years ago. "This is really our last chance to make a significant difference in how they view career opportunities."

The schools are doing their part to encourage students to identify areas of interest. From there, the heavy lifting falls to the business community.

"We recognize that businesses are in an awkward position," Rossi acknowledged. "With Covid's resurgence, tough decisions need to be made regarding access. We're really hopeful but also realistic."

The BASICS Committee has already reached out to Blair County's five hospitals, anticipating that health-care careers will likely be in the greatest demand. Finding ways to accommodate students in those facilities will take some creativity for sure. But aren't we at that point with practically everything right now?

The recruiting process for other businesses willing to host shadowing students is underway. It's difficult to know what industry sectors will be most popular. It's the chicken-or-the-egg.

"Once we know, we'll begin to contact the businesses and ask for their help," Rossi pointed out.

Parnell dedicated to hands-on care

Tim Parnell is a physical therapist with a passion for sports medicine. The Hollidaysburg native is a graduate of Juniata College and started CrossRoads Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation in Duncansville 20-years ago. Among his memorable moments was being featured in USA Today in an article with Hank Aaron and local patient Jeanne Streightiff about arthritis pain treatments. Tim and his wife, Lisa have four children – TJ, Caleb, Jordan and Emma.

The Chamber: What attracted you to physical therapy?

Tim: I was a volunteer ambulance personnel EMT as a high school student and National Ski Patrol member at Blue Knob ski resort, now for 40 years. I knew I wanted to enter the medical profession in some respect out of high school. I wanted to spend more time with patients than physicians are able to in their practices. After volunteering in a physical therapy clinic at Huntingdon Hospital, I watched a below-knee amputation patient begin to walk with a prosthesis. At that moment, I realized physical therapy was for me.

Chamber Q&A

The Chamber: What would people be surprised to know about CrossRoads Physical Therapy?

Tim: Clients are surprised at the amount of time we spend with patients, the manual therapies we perform and our compassion to get them feeling better and back on their feet, to work or play. We also treat a variety of acute and chronic pain patients, balance patients, sports medicine, industrial, orthopedic and spinal patients, arthritis, neurological and generalized deconditioning patients in physical therapy. Our manual hands-on therapy and occupational therapy provide an extensive amount of services as well.

The Chamber: CrossRoads is marking 20-years in business. How has the business changed most dramatically since first opening?

Tim: There has been a paradigm shift of reimbursement over the last 20 years with cuts projected by 9% next year alone of the Medicare fee schedule. We have to do



Tim Parnell chose physical therapy as his profession because it provides more time for him to spend with patients.

more with less reimbursement as in all medical fields despite the costs of insurances rising for our own employees' health insurance costs. Direct access has also transformed our business over the past 8-9 years. Physical therapists can, by law, evaluate and treat patients for 30 days without a prescription from a physician.

The Chamber: What types of patients are you seeing most often and to what extent do you deal with the preventive aspects of injuries?

Tim: I would say acute and

chronic pain patients, orthopedic joint and spine patients, balance patients, ankle and foot patients. We treat a variety of patients from school aged to geriatrics for all types of injuries and pain.

The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and what makes them special?

Tim: My personal role model would be my father, Tim Parnell Sr., who always taught me to work hard, serve your fellow man, and provide for his family. He was an Army veteran, active

community volunteer and was in the first volunteer paramedic class in Blair County, and an active Shriner in his later years.

The Chamber: What's on Tim Parnell's "bucket list"?

Tim: Retire with my wife of 35 years in a lake front community. Helicopter back country powder skiing with my children in Japan, Italy, Swiss Alps, Canada, and/or Alaska. Travel to Ireland and back to Italy. Learn fly fishing and play better golf in retirement. Other church mission's trips.

Slinky Action Zone springs back with exciting plans for remodel

One of Blair County's most popular attractions for fun and entertainment is undergoing a major remodeling effort that will broaden its appeal and expand its focus.

Slinky Action Zone, located in Duncansville, was opened by former Slinky CEO Betty James in 1996 and then purchased in 2006 by Dr. Gary Raymond and Dr. Alan Kivitz. Its focus has been mostly centered on children under age-10, primarily within a limited geographic region. That's about to change, according to Slinky's general manager, Shawn Campbell.

"We want this to be a destination spot, not just a place to hold parties," Campbell acknowledged. "We want people a couple hours away to identify us as a place to visit. We've always catered just to kids. Now we're catering to all ages."

Among the changes will be the construction of a 5,000 square foot, two-tier laser tag, four lanes of duck pin bowling, brand new arcade games and a brewery.

"We talked to consultants who recommended that we purchase all new arcade games. We followed that advice," Campbell explained. "We also listened to suggestions from our customers regarding laser tag. Its popularity has grown tremendously."

And the brewery?



Shawn Campbell (left), General Manager of Slinky Action Zone discusses construction with Head Technician Brian Vaughn.

"It will begin as a satellite location but our future plans may include brewing beer on-site," he noted. "Breweries are hot right now. They bring additional customers. We'll emphasize responsible drinking." Campbell gets excited as he considers the potential for Slinky Action Zone to be another reason for people to spend more time in Blair County.

"When I consider what we're doing with this project, there's so much to be optimistic about. The original expansion plan wasn't as extensive as this is turning out to be. We've had people in the community already describing us as a 'mini-Dave & Buster's.' I think we'll appeal to a broad range of people."

Including the very young. "The fact that we're offering new things geared to ad-

ditional age groups doesn't mean that we're abandoning the age group that the business was originally built for," Campbell pointed out. "Our soft-play area will still be prominent and we're looking at some creative ways to make that more popular as well."

In the meantime, Campbell is continuing to maintain the current operation as the realities of construction go on around him. If all goes well, the project will be completed in late October or early November. Expansion will mean a need for hiring additional staff – a challenge facing most employers.

"We'll be hiring seven or eight more people in October," Campbell disclosed. "We understand that might be difficult but we're also predicting that this will be a great place to work."

Limited time to apply for YEA! class of '22

The 6th class of the Blair County Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) program will have its official orientation on September 26th and will have its first session on October 5th. Between now and then, students from all Blair County schools will have an opportunity to be part of that class.

"The enthusiasm for YEA! continues to be great," explained Tim Gildea, who takes over as Program Manager from Royce Boyd. "We're anticipating participation from a wide array of



schools and we've had a number of business leaders step up to serve as instructors, mentors and session speakers."

Anyone interested in applying for the 2022 class should email Gildea at tpgildea@gmail.com or can apply directly at www.yeausa.org.

Celebrating 25-years of service to Chamber

Stacy Hoover's career at the Blair County Chamber has mirrored the organization's ability to offer more programs and events in more creative ways to more members of the business community.

"She's been a model of flexibility," acknowledges Chamber President/CEO Joe Hurd. "Whenever we've added anything new or needed someone to take-on an additional role, it's been Stacy that has stepped-up. Her talents and abilities make her an incredible asset."

Hoover is marking her 25th year at the Chamber on September 9th. She was hired as Technical Secretary and is now Vice-President of Events and Technology. Among the programs and events that she oversees are:



Stacy Hoover

Farm-City, Blair-Bedford Home Garden and Healthy Living Showcase, Chamber Golf Classic, The Alliance Trade Show and Business After Hours. She also handles all Chamber technology.

"I enjoy the diversity of responsibilities," she noted. "I love working with our members."

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